

STINK OR SWIM

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Ever wanted to swim with grass clippings and splash around in some motor oil? How about going wading with a few cigarette butts floating past your knees? As disgusting as it may sound, if you are wandering around in the water that comes from a stormdrain that is not well taken care of, you may have the chance to experience the above activities.

Of course, if the stormdrain is well maintained and people are careful about what goes down it, you can enjoy a peaceful afternoon of swimming and wading with just fish and ducks at your side.

What many people don't realize is that wastewater sewers and stormdrains are two distinct types of water moving pipes.

Sewers move waste water from within buildings, through underground pipes, to the wastewater treatment plant where the water is filtered and cleaned until it is at an acceptable level for it to be placed back into a water body.

Storm drains, on the other hand, move water from the street to a body of water or open area through underground pipes. Did you notice a missing step? Yup. That's right. Water that moves through storm drains isn't filtered or cleaned at all. That means that anything you put in a storm drain, ends up right back in the water cycle without being disinfected.

In other words, the oil, grease, yard clippings, aluminum cans, cigarette butts, plastic bags, random garbage, and all of that soapy water from washing your car in the driveway, all end up in some big open spot where the storm drain dumps its water. Without being cleaned, filtered or disinfected. At all.

And by saying "some big open spot", I am not referring to a distant place in a far off land. In my neighborhood, there is a storm drain grate right in front of my house. The outlet is only about 150 feet away on the other side of my house—also known as, my

backyard. Which means that all of the junk people drop down the storm drain, ends up just behind my house. Lovely, no?

So the next time you are wondering, should I? Or shouldn't I? Consider that what you dump down the stormdrain may end up in your back yard, your swimming hole, your lake, your ocean, or maybe even your drinking water.

As a friend of mine says, "If you don't want to drink it or swim in it, don't put it down your storm drain."

Here are some tips for how you can help keep your stormwater and stormdrains clean, courtesy of UWEX, July, 1992.

1. Do not use the storm sewer for disposing of motor oil, antifreeze, pesticides, paints, pet waste, solvents, or other materials. Most of these items can be taken to the Convenience Centers on Post to be recycled. Call-798-5695 or 798-4657 to contact the Convenience Centers.
2. Clean up leaves or grass clippings that accumulate on your driveway, sidewalk or in the street.
3. Sweep (do not wash) fertilizer and soil off driveways and walkways.
4. Minimize your use of salt on sidewalks and driveways during the winter.
5. Dispose of pet wastes by placing them in the garbage or burial.
6. Redirect down spouts from paved areas to vegetated areas.
7. Wash your car on the lawn—not the driveway.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact: 798-9588.



A toilet is an inlet to a sewer system



Manhole for a sewer. Wastewater is sent from buildings to the Wastewater Treatment Plant through these pipes. Notice the S (for sewer) on the top of the cover.



The Fort Campbell Wastewater Treatment Plant is the end point for the sewer system on Post.



Stormdrain grate/inlet on the curb of a street on Post. Notice the "Dump no waste—Drains to River" sign.



Storm drain outlet during a rainstorm, into an open field.